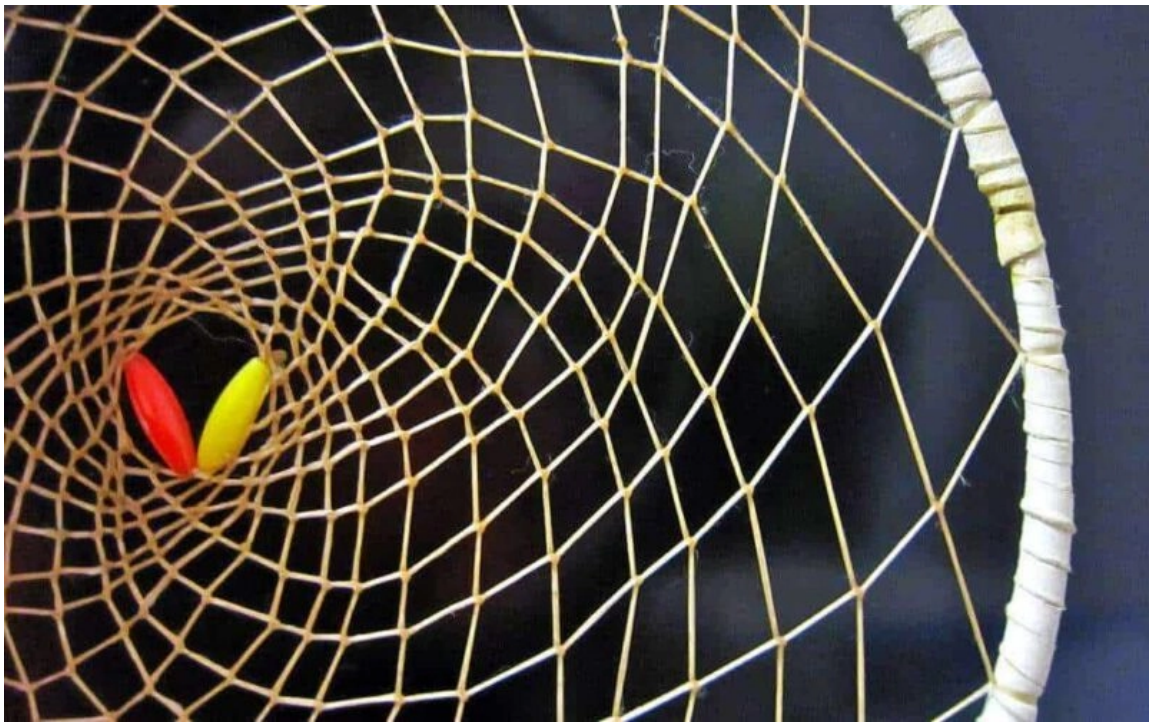
Dream Catcher | History, Origin, Meaning & Indian Symbolism



January 29, 2018 / August 19, 2021 by PowWow Articles | 27 Comments

In many Native American tribes, a dream catcher is a handmade willow hoop woven to a web or literally, a net. They can include feathers and beads, and they're traditionally suspended on cradles as a form of armor and protection.

Dream catchers are widely viewed as a symbol of oneness among numerous indigenous cultures and tribes. They're also generally looked at as an indication of Native American identity. However, some Native Americans believe dream catchers have been appropriated and offensively exploited by non-Native Americans.

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History & Origin of the Dream Catcher

Dream catchers can be traced back to the Ojibwes. The Ojibwe people started the trend and over time, dream catchers were adopted by other tribes, cultures and even nations. This adoption was made possible through the process of either intermarriage, trade or both. Dream catchers became widely accepted by Native Americans in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the Pan-Indian movement.

It is believed that dream catchers originated with Asibaikaashi, who was known as the Spider Woman. She was a custodian of all of the Ojibwe infants and adults. However, in time it became a difficult task for her to take care of all of the Ojibwe people as they started spreading out across different regions of North America.

To help, the Ojibwe women started weaving magical webs for the infants. They used willow hoops and sinew to weave them, and they gifted them to the Ojibwe children as a medium of protection. These charms hung above the children's beds to catch any bad dreams or other harm that might be present.

Dream Catcher Meaning

Each part of the dream catcher had meanings tied to the physical world. One notable meaning is the dream catcher has a round shape that represents the earth's spherical character.

DIY Dreamcatcher | How To Make A Dream Catcher Tutorial

Symbolism

While dream catchers have become widely popular phenomena outside the Ojibwe indigenous people, and even extended beyond the Pan-Indian communities, there are multiple types of dream catchers. Upon close examination of these dream catchers, you can still see that they bear some resemblance to the traditional ones—even the ones with feathers.

However, these resemblances are few and far between. There is still a sizable gap between originals and modern ones. These new styles are made, sold, and exhibited by non-Native entities, which is considered, by some, to be a violation of the culture, beliefs, and traditions attached to the traditional dream catchers.

DIY Dream Catcher

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Modern Uses

More recently, dream catchers have been used as a shared symbol of hope and healing. For instance, the Little Thunderbirds Drum and Dance Troupe from the Red Lake Indian Reservation in Minnesota have traveled to other schools that have experienced loss and school shooting and gifted them with a dream catcher. The dream catcher has now been passed from Red Lake to students at Columbine, Colorado; Sandy Hook, Marysville; Marysville, Washington; Townville, South Carolina; and Parkland, Florida. While no symbolic gesture can reverse the atrocities committed in these communities, the dream catcher continues to be a powerful symbol of unity for the people affected by these tragedies.

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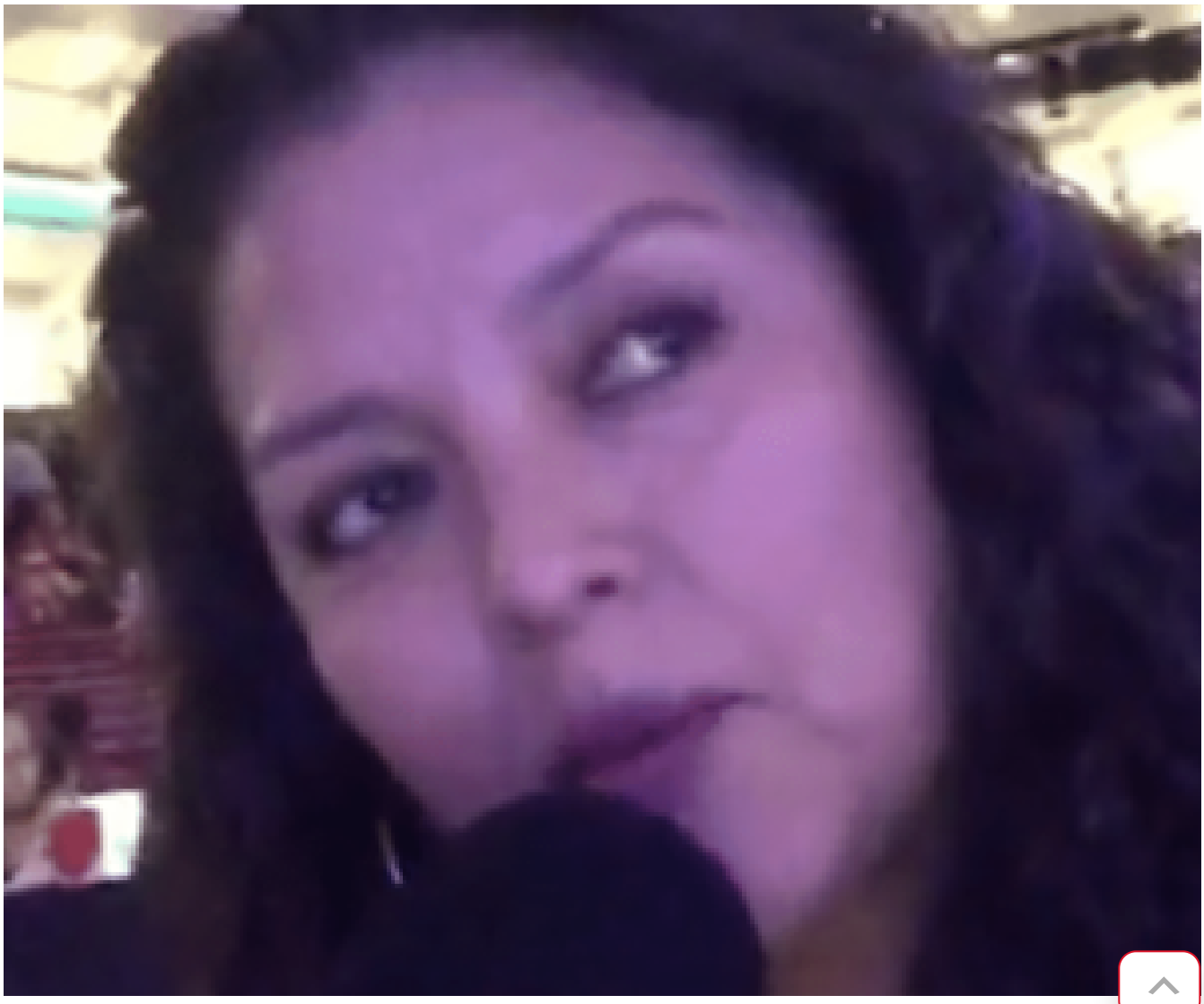

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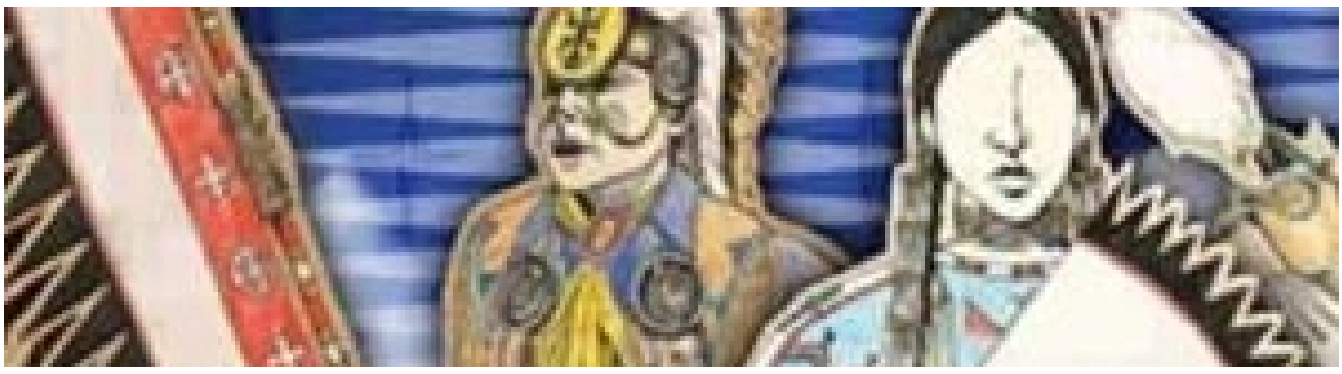

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james hafner

October 11, 2022 at 4:38 pm

i have two dream catchers in my bed room i got them sent to me at first i did not think they work but lately i have been do lot dreaming which is good kind regards james hafner queensland australia

Reply

josie

July 17, 2022 at 9:13 am

Like why get offended over someone using it? I'm half eskimo, I dont see white getting offended at me using their creations and inventions?? I think its beautiful to share cultures. also, yes I say eskimo. once I had a white person offended that I used that word. they said it's an offensive word and I should say inuit. eskimo translates to raw meat eater. its sort of true, I do enjoy raw sushi, I'll eat raw liver, etc; no need to get so offended or upset! it makes me happy when my culture is represented!

Reply

BConnolly

July 16, 2022 at 9:52 am

**Sandy Hook, Connecticut

clinton

August 19, 2021 at 4:54 pm

? does colors of dream catchers matter and if so why

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Pingback: The Perfect Catch for a Nursery: Dream Catcher - a Cup of Motherly

Pingback: I Never Kill Spiders | Spiritual Traveler Guides

Yvonne Hernandez

March 24, 2021 at 4:34 pm

My name is Yvonne Vera Hernandez. I am a High School math teacher. I want to make dream catchers but incorporate Algebra 2 into the making of the dream catcher. Is it possible to get an idea of a site that shares traditional making of these, the sizes, and so on.

Reply

quality web

February 26, 2021 at 4:56 am

hey, How do I find an authentic dream catcher and not some cheap thing made for tourists?

Reply

Go to a powwow or a reservation.

Reply

Ruby Mora

August 19, 2021 at 3:58 pm

I have some. If you're interested let me know.

Reply

quality web

February 26, 2021 at 4:30 am

The women were in charge of weaving the magical webs for the infants.

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Clopin

August 24, 2020 at 4:21 am

dream catchers should look like spider webs not the flower of life pattern.

Van

June 25, 2020 at 1:28 pm

Would someone be able to learn the tradition and ask permission to make dream catchers?

Reply

Pingback: Dream Catcher Kids Craft for Weekend Fun - In Our Spare Time

Carron Woodrum

May 17, 2020 at 11:44 am

Isn't the notion of "dream catchers" more of a modern thing? What do the original Ojibwa dream catchers look like?

Reply

Belle M Harmon

December 16, 2018 at 4:10 am

How do I find an authentic dream catcher and not some cheap thing made for tourists?? I have always suffered for horrific nightmares and would like to find one to see if it helps me.

Reply

https://www.facebook.com/groups/powwowtradingpost/

Reply

Trista Olsen

March 30, 2021 at 2:49 pm

Its an old Ojibwa tradition, said to be handed down from Spider Woman.

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Amber Woolsey

January 30, 2018 at 5:12 am

How big should a dream catcher be?

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